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THE

SHAKERS' COVENANT,

(Never before Published,)

WITH A BRIEF OUTLINE OF

SHAKER HISTORY.

BY

ROXALANA L. GROSVENOR,

Author of "Reminiscences of Life among the Shakers; Historical and Biographical Sketches."

Entered According to Act of Congress April 16, 1873, by Roxalana L. Grosvenor, in the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

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INTRODUCTION.

That the community of Shakers has excited so little attention from "the world," forming as it has for three quarters of a century, an unprecedented movement in society, is due to the very many exciting themes of the age. It is true much has been said and written of them; yet in comparison with their peculiar origin, their wonderful claims, and their position in the world, the interest excited has been inconsiderable. And yet, we have reason to believe there are many who would appreciate reliable information on the subject. That one who has been a resident in a society of Shakers over forty-six years, and was a member of one of its two most sacred offices more than twenty-seven years of that time, must possess some of the essentials to a truthful delineation of its history and present position, will be granted, if, in addition to this experience, the absence of any influence from the Society may be depended upon. This is my position—yet with the same confidence in the Founders of the Community, and the same good will to its present members, as when I was owned by them as a "sister in the Gospel." How this can be will be shown in due time.

The writing of these sketches is only initiatory, and is for the purpose of giving the Covenant to the world in accordance with the wishes of many friends, and as it appears without offence to the "community." It is not, however, my first effort in this direction. I have commenced a serial entitled "Reminiscences of Life among the Shakers; Historical and Biographical Sketches, Shaker Poems, etc," published in THE MILLIONAIRE, by Lorenzo D. Grosvenor; dwelling upon those subjects which I deem best calculated to give as clear a view of what Shakerism is, as my limits will permit.

With respect to any incident related of Mother Ann Lee which may seem incredible, I can only say I have stated nothing that was not regarded by those who compiled a narrative of the facts, soon after her decease—a part only of which has been published—as fully substantiated by witnesses living at the time; these witnesses having received their information from Ann Lee herself, and those who came with her from England. Much that has never been written but by myself, I learned of those who were eye and ear witnesses, with whom an acquaintance of many years served only to deepen my confidence in their truthfulness.

That whatever has been done in this, or any cause, deemed miraculous, is in harmony with the immutable laws of God, is doubtless true; but until we can trace those laws in the formation of the least organic germ out of invisible elements, we are scarcely competent to decide in what way they shall manifest themselves with respect to a *life* as far transcending the merely *organic*, as *that* is superior to the *physical* law.

The fact, were it duly considered, of a community existing for nearly eighty years with the Shaker characteristics of self-denial and consecration, without the seclusion imposed by the Romish Church in securing these results, is suggestive of a power, which, if it exists in the masses of humanity is not usually put to the test. The temporal thrift of the Shaker societies has been the

"star of hope" to all experimenters in community life, and the possibility of celibacy with perfect chastity, has a voice, if listened to, from which much may be learned.

It is true the Societies are now mostly on the decline. This was predicted by Father Joseph Meachem, the principal founder of "church relation," in defense of which the Covenant in its present form was instituted; yet I have no reason to suppose he regarded his arduous labors as a failure in any sense of the word. How the "Dispensation," now admitted by its leading members to be in its "decadence," is to be a *power for good* in succeeding ages must be left to the Great Designer.

Truth is a gem worth searching for. The inspiration by which it is elucidated must ever be free to take to itself such means, and assume such forms as best serve the present needs of humanity. It would be the ardent desire of every one, (even with selfishness the prevailing sentiment,) to have the best means of doing good prevail at whatever cost or sacrifice, could each fully realize how inimately blended are the interests and happiness of all created intelligences.

The Covenant must speak for itself. With all the power it gives it would be harmless in the hands of such persons as were the Founders of the Institution. But who shall vouch for "their successors forever?" Has the decree of the Almighty gone forth that he will so rule the hearts and enlighten the understandings of *all* who may be appointed to the leadership in Shakerdom, that no injustice or oppression shall ensue? And would such decree be in harmony with the volition with which he has endowed mankind? I leave these questions for the consideration of an enlighted public.

COVENANT OR CONSTITUTION.

PREAMBLE.

We, the Brethren and Sisters of the United Society of Believers (called Shakers), residing in the county of Worcester, and State of Massachusetts, being connected together as a religious and social community, distinguished by the name and title of the Church of the United Society, in the town of Harvard, which for many years has been established and in successful operation, under the charge of the Ministry and Eldership thereof, and, feeling the importance not only of renewing and confirming our spiritual covenant with God and each other, but also of renewing and improving our social compact, and amending the written form thereof, do make, ordain, and declare the following articles of agreement as a summary of the principles, rules, and regulations established in the Church of the said United Society, which are to be kept and maintained by us, both in our collective and individual capacities, as a covenant or constitution, which shall stand as a lawful testimony of our religious and social compact, before all men, and in all cases of question and law relating to the possession and improvement of our united and consecrated interest, property, and estate:

ARTICLE I.

Of the Gospel Ministry.

SECTION 1. Their origin, call and institution.

We solemnly declare to each other and to all whom it may concern, that we have received, and do hereby acknowledge as the foundation of our faith, order and government, the testimony or Gospel of Christ, in his first and second appearing, and we do hereby solemnly agree to support and maintain the true primitive faith and Christian principles, the morals, rules and manners pertaining to the said Gospel, as ministered by the founders of this Society, and kept and conveyed through a regular order of ministration, down to the present day.

And, although, as a religious society, we are variously associated, with respect to the local situations of our respective communities, yet we are known and distinguished as a peculiar people, and consider and acknowledge ourselves as members of one general community, possessing one faith, and subject to one united, parental and ministerial administration, which has been regularly supported from the first foundation pillars of the Institution, and which continues to operate for the support, protection and strength of every part of said community.

SECTION 2. Their order and office.

We further acknowledge and declare that for the purpose of promoting and maintaining union, order and harmony throughout the various branches of this community, the primary administration of parental authority has been settled in the first established ministry at New Lebanon, there to rest and remain as the center of union to all who are in Gospel relation and communion with the Society. The established order of this ministry includes four persons; two of each sex.

SECTION 3. Perpetuity of their office and how supplied.

We further acknowledge and declare that the said primary administration of parental authority has been and is perpetuated as follows: Namely, that the first in that office and calling possess

the right given by the sanction of divine authority, through the first founders of this Society, to prescribe or direct any regulation or appointment which they may judge most proper and necessary respecting the ministry or any other important matter which may concern the welfare of the Church, subsequent to their decease. But in case no such regulation or appointment be so prescribed or directed, then the right to direct and authorize such regulation and appointment devolves upon the surviving members of the ministry, in council with the Elders of the Church, or others, as the nature of the case in their judgment may require. Such appointments being officially communicated to all concerned, and receiving the general approbation of the Church, are confirmed and supported in the Society.

This is agreeable to the example recorded in the Scriptures, and continued by the founders of this Society, and is the order and manner which has been regularly practiced, acknowledged, and maintained in the Community from the beginning.

SECTION 4. Of the ministerial office in the several societies or communities.

We further acknowledge and declare, covenant and agree that the ministerial office and authority in any Society or Community of our faith, which has emanated, or which may emanate, in a regular line of *order from* the center of union aforesaid, is, and shall be acknowledged, owned and respected, as the spiritual and primary authority of such Society or Community, in all matters pertaining to the ministerial office. And in case of the decease or removal of any individual of said ministry, in any such Society, his or her lot and place shall be filled by agreement of the surviving ministers in council with the Elders and others, as the nature of the case may require, together with the knowledge and approbation of the primary ministerial authority at New Lebanon aforesaid, to which they are responsible.

SECTION 5. Powers and duties of the ministry.

The ministry being appointed and established as aforesaid are vested with the primary authority of the Church and its various branches.

Hence, it becomes their special duty to guide and superintend the spiritual concerns of the Society as a body of people under their care and government, and in connection with the Elders in their respective families and departments, who shall act in union with them, to give and establish such orders, rules and regulations as may be found necessary for the government and protection of the Church and Society within the limits of their jurisdiction, and also to counsel, advise and judge in all matters of importance, whether spiritual or temporal. The said ministry are also invested with authority in connection with the Elders as aforesaid, to nominate and appoint to office ministers, elders, deacons, and trustees, and to assign offices of care and trust to such brethren and sisters as they, the said ministers and Elders, shall judge to be best qualified for the several offices to which they may be appointed; and we do hereby covenant and agree that such nominations and appointments being made and officially communicated to those concerned, and receiving the general approbation of the Church, or of the families concerned, shall thenceforth be confirmed and supported, until altered or revoked by the authority aforesaid.

ARTICLE II.

Institution of the Church.

SECTION 1. The object and design of Church relation.

We further acknowledge and declare that the great object, purpose and design of our uniting ourselves together as a church or body of people, in social and religious compact, is faithfully and

honestly to occupy, improve and diffuse the various gifts and talents, both of a spiritual and temporal nature, with which Divine wisdom has blest us for the service of God, for the honor of the Gospel, and for the mutual protection, support, comfort and happiness of each other as brethren and sisters in the Gospel, and for such other pious and charitable purposes as the Gospel may require.

SECTION 2. Who are not admissible into Church relation.

As the unity, stability and purity of the Church essentially depend on the character and qualifications of its members, and as it is a matter of importance that it should not be encumbered with persons who are under any involvement or incapacity, natural or moral: Therefore, no member of any company or association in business or civil concern, no co-partner in trade, no person under any legal embarrassment or obligations of service, no minor, no slave or bond servant, no insane person, no profane person, nor any person who lives in the wilful violation of the known and acknowledged principles of moral conduct, shall be deemed qualified for admission into the covenant relation and communion of the Church.

SECTION 3. Preparation for admission into Church relation.

In order that believers may be prepared for entering into the sacred privilege of Church relation, it is of primary importance that sufficient opportunity and privilege should be afforded under the ministry of the Gospel, for them to acquire suitable instruction in the genuine principles of righteousness, honesty, justice and true holiness, and also that they should prove their faith and Christian morality by their practical obedience to the precepts of the Gospel according to their instructions. It is also indispensably necessary for them to receive the one uniting spirit of Christ, and to become so far of one heart and one mind, that they are willing to sacrifice all other relations for this sacred *one*. Another essential step, is to settle all just and equitable claims of creditors and *filial* heirs, so that whatever property they may possess, shall be justly their own. When this is done, and they feel themselves sufficiently prepared to make a deliberate and final choice, to devote themselves, with all they possess, wholly to the service of God, without reserve, and it shall be deemed proper by the leading authority of the Church, after examination and due consideration, to allow them to associate together in the capacity of a Church, or a branch thereof in Gospel order, they may then consecrate themselves and all they possess to the service of God forever, and confirm the same by signing and sealing a written covenant predicated upon the principles herein contained, and fulfiling, on their part, all its obligations.

SECTION 4. Admission of new members.

As the door must be kept open for the admission of new members into the Church, when duly prepared, it is agreed that each and every person who shall at any time after the date and execution of the Church Covenant, in any branch of the Community, be admitted into the Church as a member thereof, shall previously have a fair opportunity to obtain a full, clear and explicit understanding of the object and design of the Church Covenant, and of the obligations it enjoins upon the members. For this purpose, he or she shall, in the presence of two of the deacons or acting trustees of the Church, read, or hear the same distinctly read, so as to be able freely to acknowledge his or her full approbation and acceptance thereof, in all its parts. Then he, she or they (as the case may be), shall be at liberty to sign the same; and having signed and sealed it, and being subject to all the obligations required of the original signers, shall thenceforth be entitled to all the benefits and privileges thereunto appertaining; and the signature or signatures thus added shall be certified by the said deacons or trustees, together with the date thereof.

SECTION 5. Concerning youth and children.

Youth and children, being minors, cannot be received as members of the Church possessing a consecrated interest in a united capacity, yet it is agreed that they may be received under the immediate care and government of the Church, at the desire or consent of such person or persons as have a lawful right to or control of such minors, together with their own desire or consent. But no minor under the care of the Church can be employed therein for wages of any kind.

ARTICLE III.

Of the Trusteeship.

SECTION 1. Appointment, qualifications and powers of Trustees.

It has been found necessary for the establishment of order in the Society in its various branches, that superintending Deacons and Deaconesses should be appointed and authorized to act as Trustees or agents of the temporalities of the Church. They must be recommended by honesty and integrity, their fidelity in trust and their capacity for the transaction of business; of these qualifications the Ministry and Elders must be the judges. The official Trustees of the Church are generally known among us by the title of Office Deacons, of which there must be two or more; and being appointed by the authority aforesaid, they are invested with power to take the general charge and oversight of all the property, estate and interest, dedicated, devoted, consecrated and given up for the benefit of the Church; to hold in trust the fee of all the lands belonging to the Church; also all gifts, grants and donations which have been, or may hereafter be dedicated, devoted, consecrated and given up as aforesaid; and the said property, estate, interest, gifts, grants and donations shall constitute the united and consecrated interest of the Church, and shall be held in trust by the said Deacons, as acting Trustees, in their official capacity, and by their successors in said office and trust forever.

SECTION 2. Duties of the Trustees.

It is and shall be the duty of the said Deacons or acting Trustees to improve, use and appropriate the said united interest for the benefit of the church in all its departments; and for such other religious and charitable purposes as the Gospel may require; and also to make all just and equitable defense in law for the protection and security of the consecrated and united interest, rights and privileges of the Church and Society, jointly and severally as an associated community, as far as circumstances and the nature of the case may require; *Provided, nevertheless*, that all the transactions of the said Deacons or acting Trustees, in the use, management, protection, defense and disposal of the aforesaid interest shall be for the benefit and privilege and in behalf of the Church or Society as aforesaid; and not for any private interest, object or purpose whatever.

SECTION 3. Trustees to give information and be responsible to the Ministry and Elders.

It shall also be the duty of the Trustees to give information to the Ministry and Elders of the church of the general state of the temporal concerns of the church and society committed to their charge; and also to report to the said authority all losses sustained in the united interest thereof, which shall come under their cognizance. And no disposal of any real estate of the church, nor any important contract shall be considered valid without the previous approbation of the authority aforesaid, to whom the said Deacons and Trustees are and shall, at all times, be held responsible in all their transactions.

Section 4. Books of account and record to be kept.

It shall also be the duty of the Deacons or acting Trustees to keep or cause to be kept, regular books of account, in which shall be entered the debt and credit accounts of all mercantile operations and business transactions between the Church and others; all receipts and expenditures, bonds, notes and bills of account, and all other matters that concern the united interest of the church; and also a book or books of records, in which shall be recorded a true and correct copy of this Covenant; also all appointments, removals and changes in office of Ministry, Elders, Deacons and Trustees; all admissions, removals, departure and decease of members, together with all other matters and transactions of a public nature which are necessary to be recorded for the benefit of the church, and for the preservation and security of the documents, papers and written instruments pertaining to the united interest and concerns of the church, committed to their charge. And the said record shall be annually inspected by the leading authority of the church, who, together with the Trustees, shall be the official auditors of the same; and the signature of one or more of said auditors, with the date of inspection and approval shall be deemed sufficient authority for the correctness and validity of the facts and matters so recorded.

Section 5. Trustees to execute a declaration of trust.

For the better security of the united and consecrated interest of the Church to the proper uses and purposes stipulated in this covenant, it shall be the duty of the Trustee or Trustees, who may be vested with the lawful title or claim to the real estate of the Church, to make and execute a declaration of trust, in due form of law, embracing all and singular the lands, tenements and hereditaments, with every matter of interest pertaining to the Church which at the time being may be vested in him or them, or that may in future come under his or their charge of office, during his or their said Trusteeship. The said declaration shall state expressly that the said Trustee or Trustees hold all such lands, tenements or hereditaments, and all the personal property of every description belonging to the Church or Society, in trust for the uses and purposes expressed in and subject to the rules, conditions and regulations prescribed by the covenant and constitution of the said Church or Society, or any amendments thereto which shall hereafter be adopted by the general approbation of the Church, and in conformity with the primitive faith and acknowledged principles of the society. And the said declaration shall be in writing, duly executed under his or their hands and seals, and shall be recorded in the Book of Records provided for in the preceding section.

Section 6. Vacancies in certain cases; how supplied.

We further covenant and agree that in case it should at any time happen, in the course of divine providence, that the office of Trustees should become wholly vacant, by the death or defection of all the Trustees in whom may be vested the fee of the lands or real estate belonging to said Church or Society, then, and in that case, one or more successors shall be appointed by the constitutional authority recognized in this covenant, according to the rules and regulations prescribed by the same. And the said appointment, being duly recorded in the book of records, provided for in this article, shall be deemed, and is hereby declared to vest in such successor or successors, all the rights, interest and authority of their predecessors, in respect to all such lands, property or estate belonging to the Church or Society as aforesaid.

ARTICLE IV.

Of the Eldership.

SECTION 1. Choice and appointment of Elders.

The united interests and objects of believers established in Gospel order, require that Elders should be chosen and appointed for the spiritual protection of families, whose business it is to take the lead in their several departments in the care and government of the concerns of the Church and of the different families established in and pertaining to the Society. Their number and order should correspond with that of the Ministry. They are required to be persons of good understanding, of approved faithfulness and integrity, and gifted in spiritual administration. They must be selected and appointed by the Ministry, who are to judge of their qualifications.

SECTION 2. Duties of the Elders.

As faithful watchmen upon the walls of Zion, it becomes the duty of the Elders to watch over their respective families; to instruct the members in their respective duties; to counsel, encourage, admonish, exhort and reprove as occasion may require; to lead the worship; to be examples to the members, of obedience to the principles and orders of the Gospel, and to see that the orders, rules and regulations pertaining to their respective families or departments are properly kept.

ARTICLE V.

Of Family Deacons and Deaconesses.

SECTION 1. Their qualifications and appointments.

The office of family Deacons and Deaconesses has long been established in the Church, and is essentially necessary for the care, management and direction of the domestic concerns in each family, order or branch of the Church. They are required to be persons of correct and well-grounded faith in the established principles of the Gospel, faithful in duty, closely united to their Elders, and of sufficient capacity in business. Of the qualifications the Ministry and Elders by whom they are chosen and appointed must be the judges. Their number in each family is generally two of each sex, but may be more or less, according to the size of the family and the extent of their various duties.

SECTION 2. Their duties and obligations.

The Deacons and Deaconesses of families are intrusted with the care and over-sight of the domestic concerns of their respective families. It is their duty to make proper arrangements in business; to maintain good order; watch over, counsel and direct the members in their various occupations, as occasion may require; to make application to the office Deacons or Trustees for whatever supplies are needed in the several departments of the family; to maintain union, harmony and good understanding with the said office Deacons; and to report to their Elders, the state of matters which fall under their cognizance and observation. But their power is restricted to the domestic concerns of their respective families and departments, and does not extend to any immediate or direct correspondence with those without the boundaries of the church. They have no immediate concern with trade and commerce, therefore it is not their business to buy and sell, nor in any way to dispose of the property under their care, except with the counsel and approbation of the Trustees.

ARTICLE VI.

Privileges and Obligations of Members.

SECTION 1. Benefits and privileges of members in church relation.

The united interest of the church having been formed and established by the freewill offerings

and pious donations of the members respectively, from the commencement of the institution for the object and purposes already stated, it cannot be considered either as a joint tenancy or a tenancy in common, but as a *consecrated whole*, designed for and devoted to the uses and purposes of the Gospel forever, agreeable to the established principles of the Church; Therefore it shall be held, possessed and enjoyed by the Church, in their united capacity, as a sacred and covenant right; That is to say, all and every member thereof, while standing in Gospel union and maintaining the principles of this covenant, shall enjoy equal rights, benefits and privileges, in the use of all things pertaining to the Church, according to their several needs and circumstances; and no difference shall be made on account of what any one has contributed and devoted, or may hereafter contribute and devote to the support and benefit of the institution.

Section 2. Proviso.

It is nevertheless stipulated and agreed that the benefits, privileges and enjoyments secured by this covenant to the members of the Church, shall not be considered as extending to any person who shall refuse to comply with the conditions of this association; or who shall refuse to submit to the admonition and discipline of the constituted authority of the Church; or who shall wilfully depart from the principles and practice of those religious and moral obligations which have been established in the church, agreeable to the primitive faith and distinguished principles of this institution; of which refusal or non-compliance the leading authority acknowledged in the first article of this covenant shall be the proper and constitutional judges.

Section 3. Obligation of the members.

As subordination and obedience is the life and soul of every well regulated community, so our strength and protection, our happiness and prosperity, in our capacity of Church members, must depend on our faithful obedience to the rules and orders established in the Church, and to the instruction, counsel and advice of its leaders. Therefore, we do hereby covenant and agree that we will receive and acknowledge, as our Elders in the Gospel, those members in the Church who are or may be chosen and appointed for the time being to that office and calling by the authority aforesaid; and also that we will, as faithful brethren and sisters in Christ, conform and subject ourselves to the known and established faith and principles of our community, and to the counsels and directions of the Elders, who shall act in union, as aforesaid, and also to all the orders, rules and regulations which are or may be given and established in the Church, according to the principles and by the authority aforesaid.

Section 4. Duties of the members.

The faithful improvement of our time and talents in doing good, is a duty which God requires of man, as a rational, social and accountable being, and this duty is indispensable in the members of the Church of Christ. Therefore, it is and shall be required of all and every member of this institution, unitedly and individually, to occupy and improve their time and talents to support and maintain the interest of the Society, to promote the objects of this covenant, and discharge their duty to God and each other according to their several abilities and callings, as members in union with one common lead; so that the various gifts and talents of all may be improved for the mutual benefit of each other and all concerned.

Section 5.

As we esteem the mutual possession and enjoyment of the consecrated interest and privileges of the Church a valuable consideration, fully adequate to any amount of personal interest, labor or service, devoted or consecrated by any individual; we, therefore, covenant and agree, in con-

formity with an established and well known principle of the Church, that no person whatever under its care and protection, can be employed for wages of any kind, on his or her individual account, and that no ground is or can be afforded for the recovery of any property or service devoted or consecrated as aforesaid; and it is also agreed that in case of the removal of any member or members from one family, society or branch of the Church to another, his, her or their previous signature or signatures to the Church or Family Covenant from whence such member or members shall have removed, shall forever bar all claims which are incompatible with the true intent and meaning of this Covenant, in the same manner as if such removal had not taken place. Yet all who shall so remove, in union with the authority aforesaid, shall be entitled to all the benefits and privileges of the order in which they shall then be placed, so long as they shall conform to the rules and regulations of the same.

ARTICLE VII.

Dedication and Release.

SECTION 1. Dedication and consecration of persons, property and service.

According to the faith of the Gospel which we have received and agreeable to the uniform practice of the Church of Christ from its first establishment in this Society, we covenant and agree to dedicate, devote, consecrate and give up, and by this covenant we do solemnly and conscientiously dedicate, devote, consecrate and give up ourselves and services together with all our temporal interest to the service of God and the support and benefit of the Church of this community, and to such other pious and charitable purpose as the Gospel may require, to be under the care and direction of such elders, deacons, and trustees as are or may be appointed and established in the Church by the authority aforesaid.

SECTION 2. Dedication and release of private claim.

Whereas, in pursuance of the requirement of the Gospel, and in the full exercise of our faith, reason and understanding, we have freely and voluntarily sacrificed all self-interest, and consecrated and devoted our persons, services and property, as aforesaid, to the pious and benevolent purposes of the Gospel; Therefore, we do hereby solemnly and conscientiously, for ourselves and our heirs, release and quit claim to the deacons, or acting trustees of the Church for the time being, for the uses and purposes aforesaid, all our private personal right, title, interest, claim and demand of, in and to the estate, interest, property, and appurtenances so consecrated, devoted and given up; and we hereby jointly and severally promise and declare in the presence of God, and before these witnesses that we will never hereafter, neither directly nor indirectly, under any circumstances whatever, contrary to the stipulations of this covenant, make nor require any account of any interest, property, labor or service, nor any division thereof which is, has been, or may be devoted by us, or any of us, to the uses and purposes aforesaid, nor bring any charge of debt or damage, nor hold any claim nor demand whatever against the said deacons or trustees, nor against the Church or Society, nor against any member thereof, on account of any property or service given, rendered, devoted or consecrated to the aforesaid sacred and charitable purposes.

In confirmation of all the aforesaid statements, covenants, promises, and articles of agreement, we have hereunto subscribed our names and affixed our seals, commencing on this sixteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-one.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF SHAKER HISTORY.

CHAPTER I.

Experience of Mother Ann Lee in England— Voyage to America.

ANN LEE, the founder of the sect called Shakers, known among her followers by the affectionate and reverential title of Mother, did not originate the term *Shakers*. She united with a sect,—descendants from the French Prophets,—who were called by that name on account of the peculiarity of their religious worship, when in the 23rd year of her age. By dint of a most extraordinary experience of about nine years she became its acknowledged leader A. D. 1770, not as successor to those who had been the leaders of the Sect, but by their conviction, announced to the society, that their light was eclipsed by hers.

A comprehensive history of her life would form a volume of no small magnitude and interest. (The best ever given to the world is in the Millenial Church, from which I shall quote occasionally.)

"She was born in Manchester, England, Feb. 29th, 1836." Her parents were pious and respectable, but too poor to give their eight children the first rudiments of literary education.

Her visions in childhood; the burden which ever rested upon her spirit for the salvation of souls; her early marriage and subsequent struggles for emancipation—not from its duties, but from its worldliness; the alternations of heavenly joy with an intensity of suffering in which the scenes of Gethsemane were repeated, even to that degree of anguish which caused the copious perspiration induced, to be suffused with blood; the cruel persecution, of which an imprisonment of fourteen days without food, save what milk and wine could be conveyed through the key-hole of the prison door by inserting a pipe-stem and pouring the liquid into its bowl once in twenty-four hours, and this not until after the first two days, was a specimen; the assertion of learned men before whom she was arraigned that she spoke in seventy two different languages (although of herself she could not read her native tongue) are all parts of her history as I learned it from those who were acquainted with her. Concerning the last incident I quote from "America the Land of Emanuel," by Lorenzo D. Grosvenor. "Her enemies disingenuously asserted that in the unknown tongue she uttered blasphemy against God. An appeal was made to the learned. As she sat before the judges one of them said to her, 'Woman, why don't thou speak?' 'Why do not those trees wave in the breeze?' said Mother. 'Because,' said one of the bishops, 'there is no breeze.' 'So then,' said she, 'you must wait till the power of God moves me to speak.'

The council reported that she spoke in seventy two different languages or dialects, and that her inspirations contained deep and interesting mysteries of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. They recommended that no further proceedings be had against her.

I give this as it was told to me by Elder Elijah Woorster who had the statements from the first founders; a man who himself possessed the gift of tongues and of healing. This experience of Mother Ann was, of course, in England where a council of learned men could be easily convened."

In the year 1774 Mother Ann received a call to leave her native country, and repair to America—not to escape persecution, this had ceased for two years previous—but to raise the standard of gospel light and purity, as God had commanded in this land of liberty. What would worldly wisdom have predicted concerning this enterprise; when the right of woman to speak or teach was not admitted—and no woman had ever crossed the ocean as a missionary—her doctrine requiring of her converts "the full and free confession of every known sin," and the "righting of every wrong" so far as was practicable; the renunciation of all worldly honor and pleasure, living a life of celibacy; or as she would say, "following Christ in the regeneration;" "putting their hands to work and giving their hearts to God?" Not the result which has followed surely. But to resume our narrative—

On the 19th of May, 1774, Mother Ann Lee embarked at Liverpool, on board the ship Mariah, Captain Smith of New York, accompanied by seven of her disciples. Of these, William Lee, her brother, and James Whittaker, require special mention, as being identified with her in much of her previous experience,

and also in her subsequent labor to "plant the Gospel in America." John Hocknell was also an able helper, especially in a financial capacity; that her husband, Abraham Stanley, accompanied her, shows that he had tolerated, even if he had not full faith in, her peculiar call and mission.

"Before they embarked, Mother Ann told the captain he should not have whereof to accuse them, except it were concerning the law of their God." It had been their practice for years to praise God in songs and in dances. To forego their worship now, would have been to be "ashamed of Christ before men." This was far from their hearts; and they failed not to praise God as they were wont. This so offended the captain, that he threatened to throw them overboard, should they attempt the like exercise again. Yet when the inspiration again led them to worship, they went forth in response to the heavenly influence. But when the captain attempted to put his threats in execution, "the ship suddenly sprung a leak, occasioned by the start of a plank between wind and water," it being "in time of a storm."

The water flowed in so fast, notwithstanding their utmost exertions at the pumps, that the captain said he saw no possible means to save the ship from sinking. It was evening, which added to the gloom, while terror was depicted in every countenance, save those who trusted that He who had commanded them to cross the ocean, would not permit it to engulf them in its pitiless waves. Above the roar of the elements is heard the voice of Mother Ann saying, "Captain, be of good cheer; there shall not a hair of our heads perish; we shall all arrive safe to America. I just now saw two bright angels of God standing by the mast, through whom I received this promise."

Thus encouraged, the seamen wrought with more hopeful energy while she and her companions zealously assisted at the pumps. "Shortly after this, a large wave struck the ship with great violence, and the loose plank was instantly closed to its place." Whether there was aught miraculous in the event or not, it was so regarded by all at the time. Mother and her companions not only had freedom of conscience after this, but were regarded as the saviors of the ship and crew. They all arrived safe in New York, on the 6th of August following.

CHAPTER II.

Residence in the Wilderness—"Opening of the Testimony to the World"—Decease of Mother Ann—Administration of James Whittaker.

New York city, the place of landing, became the abode of Mother Ann for about a year and a half, when she and her companions became united after a temporary separation for want of a home, in the wilderness of Niskeunia (now Watervliet), where a lease of land had been secured for that purpose.

Here they made a clearing, and erected buildings; and here they remained full three years and a half, unknown to all, except their near neighbors, who had no more idea of their misson than had the natives of the forest. Indeed, it was one of these who first discovered ought peculiar about them, save the meekness of their deportment, and the transparent honesty of their dealings. One "poor Indian" saw a "bright light" around Mother, and prophesied in true native simplicity, that the "Great Spirit had sent her to do much good." And this was all the encouragement they received from mortals during this time, in which they toiled, and wept, and prayed, till all hearts failed but hers whose sufferings exceeded all the rest, but "whose mind was staid on Him" whose promise cannot fail.

In the spring of 1780, they were providentially discovered, and the news of them spread throughout the adjacent country; there being a band of waiting revivalists who gladly received their testimony. There *future* formed a perfect contrast with the *past*, as from that time they had scarcely leisure to eat or sleep on account of the multitude who sought them, from various motives. Persecution raged with violence, equalled in this country only by the persecution of the Quakers. I do not except *them* as *suffering* more than did Mother Ann, although her life was spared. They visited different localities in the State of New York, also in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Wherever they were, their residence was called "The Church," and was a place of gathering for all the surrounding country.

The "Square House," in the town of Harvard, was their home longer than any place after their mission commenced. As Harvard was my home for over thirty years, I learned much from those who were with them there, of the events connected with their residence, most of which I must omit, as my present purpose is to give only an outline of the history which I hope to give hereafter. Not only were meetings held almost constantly by day, and sometimes occupying much of the night, but hundreds were fed at the table of those who had consecrated their all to the service of God.

Soon after their return to Niskeunia, Father William Lee, whose thrilling experience of toil and suffering was second only to that of Mother Ann, departed this life July 21st, 1784, aged 44 years. Mother Ann survived him only until the 8th of Sept. following. Then "the world" predicted that the "delusion would soon come to an end," but God is able to work by means of his own choosing.

Elder James Whittaker had been named by Mother Ann as her successor while they were yet in England. The spiritually minded devotion of his youthful season, his experience in this country previous to the opening of their testimony to the world, of poverty, toil and waiting, and subsequently in preaching and laboring with the people for which he had received imprisonment, stripes and bruises; in connection with rare natural endowments, eminently qualified him for this position. So angelic his devotion, so affectionate his ministrations, and so pleasing his manner, that the cross he held forth seemed adorned with the flowers of Paradise. He was born Feb. 28, 1751, and finished his work on earth July 20, 1787 leaving the little flock in deep tribulation.

The "Three Witnesses" who came from England had all prophecied of a "gathering of the Church into order," by their disciples in America; but Father James had not appointed a successor. Joseph Meachem, the leader of the revivalists, had been named by Mother Ann as being instrumental in this great work; but the prophecy concerning *him* was merged in others of like import concerning several of the leading converts; as the idea had not then occurred to these disciples, that societies would be formed in other localities as branches of the Mother Church, each requiring its Father and Mother.

As no preponderating excellence appeared where so much native talent and intellectual power were the endowment of each, combined apparently with equal religious zeal and spiritual attainment, it seemed impossible for aught save Divine Wisdom to decide the election, and for this they devoutly sought. No confusion or dissension ensued. No eye but that which was single to the glory of God might look in upon that praying band assembled as were the apostles at the day of Pentecost to learn whom God had chosen to lead His people to the promised inheritance in which all should share alike the blessings of a bounteous Providence. And lo! the heavenly influence descended without measure. So great was the power manifested, so eloquent its utterances, so encouraging its promises, that a beholder might well say as each declared the message given, "Surely the Lord hath chosen this," yet no such evidance of power was vouchsafed to the burdened spirit of the *chosen one* as meekly he listened to the divinely inspired eloquence of his fellow laborers. When all the candidates had ceased—still waiting for a decisive manifestation, the voice of a youth, Job Bishop, was heard, calm and decided, declaring with power which left not the shadow of a doubt on the mind of any one present, that the silent listener, Joseph Meachem, was the anointed of God, to lead his people. No dissent was ever heard—it was *his* calling to "gather the Church into order."

In this he was assisted by Mother Lucy Wright, concerning whom we can do no justice in this brief sketch. That Father Joseph felt the importance and necessity of having woman share in the government, showed the lessons of wisdom he had learned. These parents of the Church had each a helper, thus completing the Order of Ministry, two of each sex. The Covenant in its present form is due to a later administration.

CHAPTER III.

The Church Gathered into Order under the Ministration of Joseph Meachem and Lucy Wright—Their Successors.

During Father Joseph's ministry societies after the pattern of the Church at New Lebanon were formed as follows. One at Watervliet, New York—four in Massachusetts, in the towns Hancock, Tyringham, Harvard and Shirley; one at Enfield in Connecticut; two in New Hampshire, one of them in Canterbury the other in Enfield; two in Maine, in the towns Alfred and New Gloucester. These were all established previous to the year 1795. The weight of responsibility thus incurred, doubtless served to hasten the departure from earth of this remarkable man. He was a native of Enfield, Conn., born Feb. 11th, 1740, deceased Aug. 16th, 1796.

On the decease of Father Joseph, Mother Lucy succeeded to the ministry by his appointment, and in harmony with the universal sentiment of the people. The result fully justified the idea that divine inspiration was the guiding influence in the arrangement. At no time has the Church been more prosperous than during the twenty-five years of her administration. During her ministry, the prophecy of Mother Ann that the "next opening of the the gospel would be in the southwest," was amply fulfilled. The Kentucky revival prepared the way for this opening, as did the revival at New Lebanon for the establishment of societies in New York and New England.

Three missionaries were sent forth by Mother Lucy to visit the subjects of the revival, *on foot*, but not without "purse and scrip" as many a bank bill was sewed into the facings of their garments, to secure it from robbers on the way. Through much toil and persecution—societies were formed as follows:—Union Village and Watervliet in Ohio, Pleasant Hill and South Union in Kentucky, and Busro in Indiana. The last was abandoned on account of the unhealthfulness of the climate.

At one time while the society remained in this place, a party of Indians made a raid upon the surrounding inhabitants, but left the Shakers unmolested, though their scalps would have been so easily taken. On the chief's being asked *why* he replied "Shaker no fight."

Persecution in the West, as well as in the East, not only failed to "suppress the testimony," but served to enhance its power. An armed force of 200 men accompanied by a mob of nearly 2,000 was one of the means resorted to to break up the society at Union Village; but in this instance no abuse was committed—The power which "stays the billows" had said "Peace be still" and they retired with enlightened views concerning an armed force for the occasion. I should say that of the mob many were friendly to the Shakers, and went for the purpose of preventing violence.

The western societies were all in a growing condition when she who sent the missionaries to plant them finished her labors on earth, Feb. 7th, 1820, aged sixty years. It may well be supposed that the news of her death cast a shade over all the societies. It was the first thrilling event of my experience in Shakerdom. I remember best my own emotions; disappointed in the expectation of seeing her, as she was to visit the different societies the ensuing season, and a fear that the Churches would be less prosperous in consequence of the bereavement.

Before Mother Lucy's departure she named her successors to Sister Ruth Landon who had been her companion in the Ministry. Her word was accepted in the succession, and the result justified the selection. The whole Order, consisting of four, two of each sex, remained intact for more than twenty-five years, and was universally sustained by all the different societies.

"The union of the spirit was the bond of peace," rendering discord impossible, although during their administration a most critical epoch in the history of the church was passed. The "spirit manifestations" which commenced in 1837, and were somewhat on the wane at the time of the Rochester rappings, proved not a ripple on the surface of their calm sea, but a tidal wave which swept over the whole community. A large volume might be written concerning this period and not exhaust the subject, but I shall speak only of the prophecies uttered by the media or *instruments*, as those persons were called by the Shakers who spoke and wrote in the name of the departed spirits. The "burden of their prophecy" was that the spirit manifestation would go out into the world while it would measureably cease with them; that there would be a great falling away from the Shaker societies, and a declension in their prosperity, succeeded by a far brighter day than earth had ever witnessed; that this manifestation of Divine power would come in a way which no one expected; that the societies would be scattered, their leaders confounded, and the present form or system demolished. I know of but one instance in which this last prophecy was uttered by a medium, but as it harmonizes with the prediction of Father Joseph Meacham, that "church order would run out," it is worthy of consideration. As there was a "diversity of spirits," I will vouch for the correctness of none, any further than facts, and the light of reason justify. Two new societies were established during this administration, one at North Union, Ohio; and one at Groveland, New York.

As one by one these venerable worthies departed from earth, or voluntarily resigned this great burden, each vacancy was well supplied; no deficiency transpiring save that which *must result* from a cessation of that inspiration in which the church was founded. This cessation is too obvious to be doubted, throwing new light on passages of Scripture which make the decrees of God appear wanting in mercy and justice,—that loving hearts may be "hardened" or "made fat;" eyes and ears of superior natural endowments made deaf and blind, in the sincere belief on their part that a *system must be supported;* and in pursuance of the irrevocable decree of the Almighty that the self-same system shall cease to be, is in harmony with the attributes of the Almighty as written in the Book of Nature as well as in the Book of Revelations. Nor are the individuals at fault any more than is the husk of corn or the calyx of the rose-bud for ceasing to grow when it has done its work.

Though the present Dispensation of Shakerdom is admitted by its leaders to be in its decadence, yet the impression seems to be that the *same system* will be resuscitated. What is wanting to its growth *now?*

It has houses and barns, and fields, and vineyards, and gardens, yet "none (or few) come to the feast." "No further growth" seems written upon the present organization. What then shall we believe respecting the wisdom and divine influence which has done so much by virtue of its establishment? That the wisdom thus exhibited is limited in its power to carry out the plan of the Designer? Let the light which these cities set upon a hill have diffused on many subjects connected with the social interests of humanity, answer: Let the emanations of divine power, arresting the selfishness of the human heart, which have been diffused through the mental atmosphere by the earnest, self-sacrificing devotion of thousands who in their day have fought with pricipalities and powers, yielding themselves and all they possessed a willing sacrifice, echo the answer: 'No word of God has returned void; no sacrifice has failed of fulfilling its mission.' "

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